# Effective Writing

Where and how to start?

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**U.S. Army War College Campus Photos**

Video **(3:09) 1. INTRODUCTION.** TRANSCRIPT Welcome to the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Distance Education Program Orientation. We look forward to working with you during the next two years as you complete this academically rigorous Distance Education Masters of Strategic Studies program. Distance education material can be accessed at any time by going to ***Education Online (EOL)*** or the DDE website. The goal of orientation is to provide you insights regarding course methodology and different facets of EOL such as accessing and successfully completing course requirements.

**2. OBJECTIVES**. The orientation has three objectives.

a. Demonstrate the ability to use USAWC Education Online (EOL) distance education automation tools.

b. Employ critical thinking skills in analyzing and discussing strategic issues in the forum and writing requirements.

c. Appraise your initial experience with this distance education program by providing constructive feedback in the survey.

**3. SCOPE**. This orientation consists of two blocks of instruction designed to prepare you for education at the strategic leadership level. You will be introduced to the USAWC Distance Education Program methods and procedures such as participating in online forums and completing written requirements.

**4. CURRICULUM RELATIONSHIPS**. This orientation prepares you to participate in the Distance Education Program

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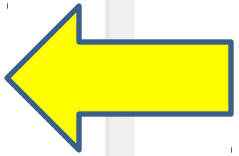
leadership level. You will be introduced to the USAWC Distance Education Program methods and procedures such as participating in online forums and completing written requirements.

**4. CURRICULUM RELATIONSHIPS**. This orientation prepares you to participate in the Distance Education Program and to use EOL. It provides guidance and critical thinking skills for use throughout the entire curriculum. Mastery of these skills is essential for you to successfully complete the two-year USAWC curriculum.

**5. ORGANIZATION**. This orientation course is organized into two blocks of instruction that will prepare you to successfully complete this distance education program and contains three evaluative requirements (Individual Learning Plan, 150-300 word forum contribution and 500-word essay on critical thinking). It is extremely important for you to keep pace as you progress through the course. The following timeline will assist you in participating/observing in these forums and scheduling your time:

| Event | Date |
|---|---|
| Block 1 Computer Configuration and Individual Learning Plan | 6 May 2008 |
| Block 2 Forum on Critical Thinking | 7-13 May 2008 |
| Block 2 500 word essay on Critical Thinking | 22 May 2008 |
| Complete Orientation Survey and Upload all Requirements | 22 May 2008 |



**Block 1: Introduction to USAWC Education Online**

**Objectives:**

a. Configure your computer for EOL.

b. Appraise the USAWC Distance Education automation tools and applications by accessing course materials.

c. Formulate and submit an Individual Learning Plan.

**Block 2: Demonstrating Adult Learning and Critical Thinking Skills**

**Objectives:**

a. Contribute to a Distance Education online forum.

b. Demonstrate graduate level writing and strategic leader critical thinking skills in a short essay.

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**7. RESOURCES**. The resources listed below are in Education Online or issued separately. In addition to these readings, each individual block contains specific online readings, which you must consult. EOL and these resources are required to achieve the learning objectives and to complete the course requirements.

a. Studying the resources for each block of instruction is essential to understanding the subject matter. You should use these resources to ensure you have grasped the key points outlined in the objectives and instructional notes for each block of instruction. You must decide what you need to do to master the objective, i.e. how much to read and what resources to use. The following resources are available throughout the orientation block of instruction:

(1) Paul, Richard and Linda Elder. ***The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts & Tools.*** Dillon Beach, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2001.

(2) Facione, Peter A. ***Critical Thinking: What it is and why it counts.*** Millbrae, CA: California Academic Press, 2007.

(3) Gerras, Steve. **Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking: A Fundamental Guide for Strategic Leaders.** Carlisle Barracks, June 2006.

(4) U.S. Army War College. ***USAWC DEP Student Development Guide,*** U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013.

(5) Department of Distance Education, **USAWC Education Online – User Guide**, USAWC, 2010.

(6) United States Army War College Communicative Arts Directive, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013.

(7) USAWC Distance Education Course Catalogue for the Class of 2010.

*"Read not to contradict nor to believe, but to weigh and consider."*

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**8. EVALUATIVE REQUIREMENTS**. Complete and submit the three evaluative requirements (Individual Learning Plan, Entry in the Forum Folder, and Writing Requirement described below not later than **22 May 2008**.

Click **here** for formatting guidance on the written requirements and cover sheet.

**a.** Following Block 1 instructions in this course and the **User Guide** configure your computer for use with Education Online. Once your computer is configured, complete the following three tasks:

(1) Change your password to one of your choosing.

**NOTE:** Because of new password requirements the EOL change password capability has been temporarily taken offline. Once modifications have been made the utility will be reactivated. Stay tuned to News & Events for more information on this topic.

(2) Enter your biographical data.

(3) Using the instructions for submitting requirements in EOL, email a digital photo file of you to **Carl DDE-Admin@conus.army.mil** by 22 May 2008. The photo (head shot) need not be an official photo; an appropriate photograph taken with a digital camera is acceptable.

**b. Evaluative Requirement 1**. Using the USAWC Distance Education Student Development Guide for the **Individual Learning Plan** (ILP) and the resources provided, complete and submit your **ILP** online. Your ILP need only be one page but can be more if you choose. The ILP tool used to complete this requirement is linked in Section 4, Block 1 of this course. The ILP is your plan for how you will achieve your academic and personal objectives while balancing your personal and professional responsibilities. Studies have found that individuals who have clear and measurable goals are generally more successful than those who do not.

**c. Evaluative Requirement 2**. (150-300 words) Access the Orientation Forum and read the instructions. You will be directed to enter a folder and provide a brief introduction, your forum contribution, and an after action comment. Your forum contribution is a paragraph (150-300 words) that summarizes discussion points from the course readings on Critical Thinking. Use the theses statements from each of the three articles (Paul & Elder, Facione, and Gerras) to discuss the principles of critical thinking and why it is an important attribute for strategic leadership.

**d. Evaluative Requirement 3.** (500 words) Use critical thinking skills to analyze the articles by Paul & Elder, Facione and Gerras. This is not an exercise in telling us what the authors wrote but why critical thinking is an important strategic leader attribute. Your paper should be a concise, clear, logically organized essay that emphasizes analysis and exposition. It should contain the following elements:

(1) A brief statement of Paul & Elder, Facione and Gerras' theses on Critical and Creative Thinking.

(2) Assessment of how critical thinking can be applied to the DDE program of study and personal development as a strategic leader. Provide examples as appropriate to support your position and cite references in accordance with the **DDE Style Guide.** (Communicative Arts Directive)

Evaluators will judge your essay based on three criteria: content, organization, and style. Do not use first person in your writing requirements for this program and keep within 10 percent of the directed word count (500 words for this requirement). Ensure that you check for correct grammar and spelling and use endnotes to cite references that have been provided about critical thinking. Please do not seek editorial or second-reader assistance on this assignment.

After editing and proof reading your writing sample essay (on your own), upload it using Education Online. **You must complete all of these requirements in order to begin Course 2201.**

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# Block 2: Demonstrating Adult Learning and Critical Thinking Skills



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## Lesson 1: Writing Resources.

Good grammar and writing guides are primary tools of the individual who wants to communicate effectively. This is equally true whether you are communicating electronically or in hard copy. Your writing is a reflection of you and your thought processes, and a record that others can see and review. When pen goes to paper or fingers to keyboard, you should always be aware that what you are doing is part of the record.

Here are online writing resources that you will find useful. Examine them to determine what is available to you in each. As you move through the sites sample what they have to offer and if you think your writing needs to improve, pause and review what you know to be your problem areas. Alternatively, set aside some time to "study" writing skills in more depth.

**The Capital Community College Guide to Grammar and Writing.**

OWL Online Writing Lab

Writer's Workshop

## Lesson 2: Directed Learning Activity – "Desktopping" A Writing Guide.

Now that you have examined the resources above, select one that you believe would serve best as your writing aid. Go to that site. Right click with your mouse. A screen should appear with a number of options. Select "Create Shortcut" by left clicking your mouse. Then left click the OK in the box that appears. You now have a writing guide on your desktop that you can refer to anytime you have a question. You will also find a writing guide in **EOL** under References.

## Lesson 3: Directed Learning Activity – Forum.

**Directed Learning Activity. Forum Use Tutorial**. Click on the icon for a tutorial on forum participation.

Welcome to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) - Windows Internet Explorer
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
Welcome to the Purdue University Online Writing...

# The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)

## Suggested Resources

- Site Map
- Grades 7-12 Instructors and Students
- English as a Second Language
- Non-Purdue Instructors and Students
- Purdue Instructors and Students
- Professional Writers
- Parents
- Adult Basic Education (GED, ESL, Cover Letters, Résumés)

## Featured OWL Resources

*Read the Purdue OWL News.*
*RSS Feed*

*Purdue OWL Podcasts on Boilercast!*

## The Purdue Online Writing Lab

Welcome to the **Purdue OWL.** We offer over 200 free resources including:

- Writing and Teaching Writing
- Research
- Grammar and Mechanics
- Style Guides
- ESL (English as a Second Language)
- Job Search and Professional Writing

## The Writing Lab at Purdue

Purdue University students, faculty, and staff at our West Lafayette, IN campus may access this area for information on the award-winning **Purdue Writing Lab.** This area includes Writing Lab hours, services, and contact information.

Search the OWL

## Most Popular Resources

- OWL Exercises
- APA Formatting and Style Guide
- MLA 2009 Formatting and Style Guide
- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Writing the Basic Business Letter
- Developing a Résumé

## Contact the Purdue OWL

Writing-related questions: **OWL Mail**

Site-related and technical questions: **OWL Webmaster Jeffrey Bacha**

Content and copyright-related questions: **OWL Coordinator Elizabeth Angeli**

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http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/
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# Purdue Online Writing Lab



Search the OWL GO

Teacher and Tutor Resources

Writing Instructors

Parents

Grades 7-12 Instructors and Students

Non-Purdue College Level

Non-Purdue Users

Purdue College-Level

Adult Basic Education

Writing Across the Curriculum: An Introduction

Creative Nonfiction in Writing Courses

Poetry in Writing Courses

Teaching Detailed Writing and Procedural Transitions

Teaching OSDDP: A Guide for Professional Writing Instructors

Email Etiquette for Professors

For access to all OWL resources, click here. Please click on the links below to access resources for non-Purdue college level instructors and students:

## Process

Starting the Writing Process - This resource contains tips for instructors and student on beginning writing.

Prewriting - This section explains the prewriting (invention) stage of the composing process. It includes processes, strategies, and questions to help you begin to write.

Writer's Block / Writer's Anxiety - This resource contains help for overcoming writer's block and a short series of exercises to help students begin writing.

Developing an Outline - This resource describes why outlines are useful, what types of outlines exist, suggestions for developing effective outlines, and how outlines can be used as an invention strategy for writing.

Paragraphs and Paragraphing - The purpose of this resource is to provide some basic instruction and advice regarding the creation of understandable and coherent paragraphs.

Research: Overview - This section provides answers to the following research-related questions: Where do I begin? Where should I look for information? What types of sources are available?

Searching the World Wide Web - This section covers finding sources for your writing in the

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Purdue OWL: Starting the Writing Process - Windows Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/587/01/

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Search the OWL GO

General Writing

The Writing Process

Writing Task Resource List

Starting the Writing Process

Invention

Prewriting (Invention)

Writer's Block

Stasis Theory

Creating a Thesis Statement

Developing an Outline

Reverse Outlining

Proofreading

Suggested Resources

-2009 MLA Guide

-2009 APA Guide

-Purdue OWL Flash Movies

-Purdue OWL Podcasts

# Invention: Starting the Writing Process

**Summary:** Tips for how to start a writing assignment.

**Contributors:** Stacy Weida, Karl Stolley

**Last Edited:** 2010-04-17 05:23:17

## Writing takes time

Find out when is the assignment due and devise a plan of action. This may seem obvious and irrelevant to the writing process, but it's not. Writing is a process, not merely a product. Even the best professional writers don't just sit down at a computer, write, and call it a day. The quality of your writing will reflect the time and forethought you put into the assignment. Plan ahead for the assignment by doing pre-writing: this will allow you to be more productive and organized when you sit down to write. Also, schedule several blocks of time to devote to your writing; then, you can walk away from it for a while and come back later to make changes and revisions with a fresh mind.

## Use the rhetorical elements as a guide to think through your writing

Thinking about your assignment in terms of the rhetorical situation can help guide you in the beginning of the writing process. Topic, audience, genre, style, opportunity, research, the writer, and purpose are just a few elements that make up the rhetorical situation.

Topic and audience are often very intertwined and work to inform each other. Start with a broad view of your topic such as skateboarding, pollution, or the novel Jane Eyre and then

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## Keep in mind the purpose of the writing assignment.

Writing can have many different purposes. Here are just a few examples:

- Summarizing: Presenting the main points or essence of another text in a condensed form
- Arguing/Persuading: Expressing a viewpoint on an issue or topic in an effort to convince others that your viewpoint is correct
- Narrating: Telling a story or giving an account of events
- Evaluating: Examining something in order to determine its value or worth based on a set of criteria.
- Analyzing: Breaking a topic down into its component parts in order to examine the relationships between the parts.
- Responding: Writing that is in a direct dialogue with another text.
- Examining/Investigating: Systematically questioning a topic to discover or uncover facts that are not widely known or accepted, in a way that strives to be as neutral and objective as possible.
- Observing: Helping the reader see and understand a person, place, object, image or event that you have directly watched or experienced through detailed sensory descriptions.

You could be observing your dorm cafeteria to see what types of food students are actually eating, you could be evaluating the quality of the food based on freshness and quantity, or you could be narrating a story about how you gained fifteen pounds your first year at college.

You may need to use several of these writing strategies within your paper. For example you could summarize federal nutrition guidelines, evaluate whether the food being served at the dorm fits those guidelines, and then argue that changes should be made in the menus to better fit those guidelines.

## Pre-writing strategies

Once you have thesis statement just start writing! Don't feel constrained by format issues. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or writing in complete sentences. Brainstorm and write down everything you can think of that might relate to the thesis and then reread and evaluate the ideas you generated. It's easier to cut out bad ideas than to only think of

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DE2200: Directive



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**c. Evaluative Requirement 2.** (150-300 words) Access the Orientation Forum and read the instructions. You will be directed to enter a folder and provide a brief introduction, your forum contribution, and an after action comment. Your forum contribution is a paragraph (150-300 words) that summarizes discussion points from the course readings on Critical Thinking. Use the theses statements from each of the three articles (Paul & Elder, Facione, and Gerras) to discuss the principles of critical thinking and why it is an important attribute for strategic leadership.

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After editing and proof reading your writing sample essay (on your own), upload it using Education Online. **You must complete all of these requirements in order to begin Course 2201.**

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**Lesson 3: Directed Learning Activity – Forum.**

**Directed Learning Activity. Forum Use Tutorial**. Click on the icon for a tutorial on forum participation. Use the following readings to prepare your contribution (150-300 words) about the elements of critical thinking from your course readings and how you will apply it to your Army War College studies.

(1) Paul, Richard and Linda Elder. ***The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts & Tools.*** Dillon Beach, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2001.

(2) Facione, Peter A. ***Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It counts.*** Millbrae, CA: California Academic Press, 2007 Update (online).

(3) Gerras, Steve. **Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking: A Fundamental Guide for Strategic Leaders.** Carlisle Barracks, June 2006.

**Lesson 4: Written Requirement.**

See **Paragraph 8** of the Directive.

**Section 4: To Know More about Adult Education (Optional Reading)**

In most of the courses in the USAWC Distance Education Program, additional material will be provided for students with the time and interest to pursue topics in greater detail. As with this section, they will be designated "**To know more**" and are strictly optional and not essential to addressing the assigned Evaluation Requirements.

What follows are additional discussion and resources on a variety of topics applicable to adult learning. Included are study hints and tips – some tools to put into your kit bag. Not all will apply to you, but reflecting on the theory and tools will help you find what works for you.

**Lesson 1: Learning Theory.**

You have now been given different perspectives of adult learning. Some of what you have studied covers the same ground, but is it redundant? What is the same? What is different? Can you **synthesize** these two perspectives and formulate your own perspective of adult learning?

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## Section 2: Critical Thinking

The United States Army War College's (USAWC) academic methodology is to foster thinking rather than just present information. Critical thinking is a conceptual skill that helps you acquire knowledge and wisdom. It is about learning "how to think," not "what to think." The aim is to help you acquire the habit of intellectual self-reliance, a commitment to objectivity, and intellectual curiosity by considering long term and secondary effects of decision-making. Course Authors strive to include the best material they can find on a subject and to provoke thought so that students can draw their own conclusions. You should look for weak arguments and good analogies to distinguish truth from fiction and unfounded supposition from reasoned conclusions. Use critical thinking to assess the resources in developing your evaluative requirements.

This section begins with an article, model and video presentation by an USAWC faculty member, Dr. Steve Gerras on critical thinking to provide some insights about this approach to your studies.

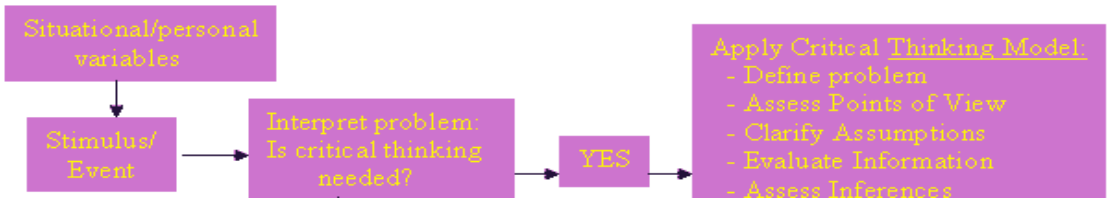
### Lesson 1: COL Gerras on Critical Thinking.

Gerras, Steve. "Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking: A Fundamental Guide for Strategic Leaders." Carlisle Barracks, June 2006. 1-28 (28 pages)

Critical Thinking by Dr. Steve Gerras. Dr. Gerras is a faculty member in the Department of Command, Leadership and Management at the U.S. Army War College and did his doctoral work on leadership. PowerPoint Presentation (780 KB)

mp3 Audio only (16:18)

A Critical Thinking Model:



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